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**Jewish
Renaissance
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A Community Action Agency

ONE PEOPLE, ONE HEART

The Power of Increasing College Opportunity and Job Readiness Skills:
A note from School-Based Youth Services Program

Perth Amboy, NJ – There is power in nurturing freshman, juniors, and seniors to follow a better path. There is also power in knowing that along with job readiness and college readiness skills, we also foster, grit, resilience, perseverance and a growth of mindset, the so-called “soft skills for success.” That’s why the **School-Based Youth Services Program** ensured we gave students the possibility to polish and grow their skills in a holistic way.

This past year, **School Based Youth Services Program**, a Project of the Jewish Renaissance Foundation, funded by the New Jersey Department of Children and Families, successfully marketed The School Based College and Job Readiness Programs to PATH high schoolers. We recruited a total of fifty-one students, who participated in the College and Job Readiness Programs throughout the year. During this time, all fifty-one Students had the opportunity to practice their professionalism and their interpersonal skills, learning to be flexible while persisting in completing demanding projects.

For Adalfi Jimenez, a soon to be senior who participated in our Careers in Early Childhood Education Program, in our fall and spring College Tours Program, and our summer program “The Anti-Poverty Summit,” and who has also completed the Peer Mediation Program, he came out saying; “I know now that college is definitely an option for me, and if I persist, I can be very successful in what I do.” Adalfi, not only gained the confidence of knowing he can thrive, even if the situation he is dealing with might be challenging, he is now full of a new sense of competence and an expanded mindset growth. As Carol Dweck, a widely regarded researcher in the field of developmental psychology, studies shows, taking charge of success, focusing on self-development and responsibility is what really counts when getting ready for school and life success. And yes, there is power in having a program that focuses just on that, providing students the opportunities to practice their skills, while also expanding their minds while shaping their futures.

Shaping one Future at a Time

We are also proud to report that all the seniors in the College Readiness Program were admitted to at least one College or University. In addition, we supported these students by helping them apply for scholarships. Seven students received full scholarships to attend their University of choice. We made a significant dent in helping these students achieve their potential, not only making college a reality for them, but also assisting them to figure out and understand how to pay for it. Yes, figuring out how to pay for college has to be part of the equation, and having to do it all alone is one reason why some students shy away from even thinking about going to college.

Through our College Readiness Program, we assisted all the student in the program with their FAFSA and Hessa applications. All the students we assisted qualified to receive financial aid. In addition, we worked hard to connect students with high GPA to Ivy League schools, encouraging them to apply. This year we are happy to report that as a result, Raffy T. was admitted to Princeton University, and he will be attending this fall, on a full-scholarship.

And because at **School Based Youth Services Program** we are always striving for more, we also partnered with Dress for Success. Students who had interviews with the college officers received free professional attire from Dress for Success, so that they could make a great first impression. The partnerships we have are an important resource to provide services to students with a limited budget.

Other important partnerships we pursued were with the library to expose students to Careers in Early Childhood Education and other resources available to them. We also partnered with Middlesex County Family Court to expose students to Careers in Law. Students had the opportunity to chat with Honorable Judge Nieves, who is a champion for higher education and personal responsibility. The other noteworthy accomplishments were to engage 65 students in our Financial Literacy Program offered in collaboration with PNC Bank. In addition, we also ensure that we attended to students that had chosen to be parents while in high school. We offered a Parenting group for new parents and expecting moms.

While we cannot list every initiative and project we were engaged in, we would like to highlight the following projects:

- Careers in Early childhood Ed Series: 7 Sessions completed
- College Tour to Rider University: 16 participants
- Georgetown university Tour: 12 participants
- College Trip informational meeting for parents: 8 participants
- College Tour to Morgan State University: 12 participants
- College Tour to Penn State University: 12 participants
- College Tour to Rutgers University: 26 participants
- College Tour to Widener University: 12 participants
- College Readiness: Dress for Success trip: 9 participants

- College Tour to Rutgers University (2nd tour): 7 participants
- College Tour to Rutgers University (3rd tour): 9 participants
- College Tour To Princeton University: 15 participants
- College Tour to Montclair State: 30 participants
- Financial Literacy Workshop Grade 12: 20 participants
- Financial Literacy Workshop Grades 9-11: 38 participants
- FAFSA workshops for parents and students: 27 participants
- Service-Learning Programs “Got Heart”: 600+ student participants
- Peer Mediation Program: 15 participants
- Anti-Poverty Youth Summit: 23 participants

And as we wrapped up our summer program, we began planning for what is coming next to ensure that we have an even better 2016-2017 academic year. And if you are as excited as we are, we hope that you will join us, as an intern or volunteer to our program, to ensure that we help as many students as possible to take the first steps to a great future.

For more information about our program and initiatives please contact Jusleine Daniel at (732) 376-6030 x 23510 or by email at jusleine.daniel@jrfnj.org

About Us: School Based Youth Services is funded by the N.J. Department of Children and Families and is a Project of the Jewish Renaissance Foundation. The School Based Youth Services Program (SBYSP) was started in 1987 to help young people navigate their adolescent years, finish their education, obtain skills leading to employment or continuing education, and graduate healthy and drug free.